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Message Text

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ACTION PM-09

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ADP-00 CIAE-00 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12 EB-11 COME-00

DOTE-00 RSR-01 CG-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /091 W
---------- 108537
R 190300 Z APR 73
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0792
INFO DIA WASHDC
CINCPAC
CINCPACREP CANBERRA
NAVELEXSYSCOM PME-119
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CANBERRA 2271

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, AS, US
SUBJ: PROJECT OMEGA
REF: A) CANBERRA 1972 B) BANCERRA A-038, FEB 15, 197 1
C) CANBERRA A-80, MARCH 30, 1973

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: IN LONG CONCERSATION WITH FIRST ASSISTANT SECRETARY UNKLES OF DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT, EMBASSY FABORABLY IMPRESSED WITH UNDERSTANDING OF OMEGA AND WITH STRONG DESIRE OF UNKLES ANDMINISTER FOR TRANSPORT JONES TO GAIN APPROVAL FOR AN AUSTRALIAN OMEGA STATION. IN SPEECH APRIL 17, JONES REQUESTS POTENTIAL AUSTRALIAN USERS OF SYSTEM TO COME FORWARD WITH SUPPORT FOR OMEGA AND UNKLES IS WORKING ON GAINING ADDITIONAL FAVORABLE PUBLICITY FOR SYSTEM IN AUSTRALIA. UNKLES DOES NOT BELIEVE TIME IS PROPITIOUS FOR VISIT OF OMEGA TEAM FROM WASHINGTON BUT WOULD APPRECIATE UPDATING OF STATUS OF SYSTEM AND ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WHICH WOULD BE USEFUL TO HIM IN THIS REGARD. END SUMMARY. ACTION REQUESTED: AS
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INDICATED IN REF C, EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE A) INFOR-
MATION ABOUT STATUS OF OMEGA STATIONS IN OTHER COUNTRIES
WHICH COULD BE USED BY AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IN PUBLIC
AND B) AS MUCH INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE ABOUT RECENT
EXPERIENCES WITH OMEGA WHICH HAVE RESULTED IN SUB-
STANTIAL SAVINGS TO THE USERS OF THE SYSTEM, E. G.
USE BY NORWEGIAN SHIPPING FLEET AND COMMERCIAL USERS
OF THE SYSTEM.

2. EMBOFF HAD LONG LUNCHEON APRIL 18 WITH FIRST
ASSISTANT SECRETARY GERRY UNKLES OF DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORT WHO IS CHARGED WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR
PROJECT OMEGA WITHIN HIS DEPARTMENT. UNKLES IS
NORMALLY RESIDENT IN MELBOURNE BUT WAS VISITING CANBERRA
PARTLY IN CONNECTION WITH SPEECH WHCIH MINISTER FOR
TRANSPORT JONES GAVE TO ANNUAL MEETING OF AUSTRALIAN
CHAMBER OF SHIPPING APRIL 17. UNKLES IS FORMERLY HEAD
OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD, A POSITION FROM WHICH
HE RESIGNED IN DISGUST IN DECEMBER 1970 (REF B).
UNKLES IS SOLIDLY BEHIND OMEGA PROJECT AND IS TOUGH
PUBLIC SERVANT WHO GIVES FIRM " NO NONSENSE" IMPRESSION
IN CONVERSATION.

3. MINISTER JONES' SPEECH TO CHAMBER OF SHIPPING
INCLUDED FOLLOWING TWO PARAGRAPHS OF INTEREST ON OMEGA:
" I HAVE HEARD FROM A FEW GROUPS IN AUSTRALIA.
SOME FAVOUR AN AUSTRALIAN STATION TO COMPLETE THE
NETWORK, BUT OTHERS OPPOSE IT. THESE OPPONENTS ARE
OBVIOUSLY ILL- INFORMED AND NOT CONCERNED WITH
NAVIGATION BUT WITH POLITICS. HOWEVER, I HAVE HEARD
LITTLE FROM INDUSTRY AND, ALTHOUGH IT IS TRUE THAT
THE GOVERNMENT IS REFERRING THE OMEGA QUESTION TO A
PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE TO EXAMINE ITS DEFENCE AND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS IMPLICATIONS, AND I, THEREFORE, DO NOT
WANT TO ANTICIPATE THESE INQUIRIES, I CANNOT UNDER-
STAND WHY INDUSTRY, ESPECIALLY THIS CHAMBER AND THE
MARITIME UNIONS HAVE NOT ADDRESSED ME ON THE SUBJECT.
" PERHAPS THEY FELT THAT THE REMARKS MADE BY
VARIOUS REPRESENTATIVES BOTH OF INDUSTRY AND OF
PRACTISING MARINERS AT THE 1971 NAVAIDS SYMPOSIUM-
ALL OF SUCH REMARKS FAVOURING THE SYSTEM- WERE ENOUGH.
I DO NOT THINK THE SHIPPING INDUSTRY SHOULD FEEL THAT
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WAY- YOU SHOULD SAY TO ME WHETHER OR NOT YOU FAVOUR

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THE SYSTEM, AND WHY."

4. IN DISCUSSING ABOVE PARAGRAPHS, UNKLES STATED THAT DEPT OF TRANSPORT WAS TRYING TO PUT THE BEE ON POTENTIAL AUSTRALIAN USERS OF THE SYSTEM AND THAT HE HIMSELF HAD BEEN CONCERNED TO GENERATE SOME FAVORABLE PUBLICITY ABOUT THE SYSTEM. IN THIS CONNECTION HE ALSO SAID HE WAS SEARCHING FOR AN AUSTRALIAN ACADEMIC WHO WAS FABORABLY DISPOSED TO THE SYSTEM AND COULD COUNTER THE ARGUMENTS BEING ADVANCED BY OTHER ACADEMICS LIKE HUTTON OF MONASH UNIVERSITY IN MELBOURNE AND COOKSEY OF AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY IN CANBERRAM IN THIS CONNECTION, EMBOFF MENTIONED PROFESSOR AT UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND WHO HAS BEEN OVERSEEING MONITORING WORK BEING DONE ON OMEGA IN VICINITY OF BRISBANE. UNKLES INDICATED HE WAS AWARE OF THIS POSSIBILITY.

5. WHEN ASKED SPECIFICALLY ABOUT TEAM FROM WASHINGTON VISITING AUSTRALIA SOON, UNKLES STATED SUCH VISIT MIGHT RAISE CERTAIN AMOUNT OF PUBLICITY WHICH HE FELT WOULD BE DETRIMENAL. HE INDICATED HE WOULD BE HAPPY TO RECEIVE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AS SUGGESTED REF A AND C FOR USE BY THE GOVERNMENT BUT THAT HE COULD NOT IN GOOD CONSCIENCE
RECOMMEND THAT A TEAM FROM WASHINGTON COME AT THIS TIME. HE MENTIONED BRIEFLY THE POSSIBILITY THAT SHOULD THE TEAM COME, THEY MIGHT BE ASKED TO APPEAR BEFORE THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED JOINT COMMITTEE ON DEFENSE AND FOREIGN POLICY OF THE AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT. UNKLES SAID HE EXPECTED PEOPLE FROM HIS OWN DEPARTMENT TO BE CALLED BEFORE THE COMMITTEE IN DUE COURSE.

6. IT IS EXPECTED THAT JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE WILL HOLD FIRST MEETING WHEN PARLIAMENT RESUMES ON MAY 2, ALTHOUGH NAMES OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS ARE NOT YET AVAIGBLE. UNKLES GAVE HIS IMPRESSION THAT SENATOR WHEELDON, THE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, WAS PRETTY INDEPENDENT AND NOT EASILY AWAYED. WHEELDON, HE NOTED, HAD A REPUTATION FOR FAIRLY STRONG NATIONALISM AND ALTHOUGH
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NOT CONSIDERED TO BAWANTI- AMERICAN PER SE SEINC HE HAS AN AMERICAN WIFE, CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO BE PARTICULARLY IN FAVOR OF OMEGA.

7. IN DISCUSSING ATTRIBUTES OF OMEGA SYSTEM, UNKLES

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SAID HE WAS ASKED SOME TIME AGO BY MINISTER JONES WHY
THE U. S. WAS INTERESTED IN PROMOTING THE OMEGA SYSTEM
AT SOME COST AND EFFORT TO ITSELF. UNKLES REPLIED HE

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ACTION PM-09

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ADP-00 CIAE-00 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12 EB-11 COME-00

DOTE-00 RSR-01 CG-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /091 W
---------- 108591
R 190300 Z APR 73
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0793
INFO DIA WASHDC
CINCPAC
CINCPACREP CANBERRA
NAVELEXSYSCOM PME-119
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

C O N F I D E N T I A L FINAL SECTION OF 2 CANBERRA 2271

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

FELT OMEGA WAS EXPECTED TO BE A REPLACEMENT FOR THE
LORAN SYSTEM, AT LEAST IN CERTAIN PLACES, AND THAT
BECAUSE LORAN REQUIRED SO MANY STATIONS, THERE WOULD
BE A CONSIDERABLE SAVINGS TO THE U. S. WITH THE IMPLE-
MENTATION OF OMEGA. UNKLES GAVE AS THE REASON FOR HIS
DEPARTMENT' S INTEREST IN THE SYSTEM ITS ABILITY TO
PROVIDE ACCURATE NAVIGATION FOR SHIPS COMING TO
AUSTRALIA. HE NOTED THAT WITH OMEGA A SHIP WHICH IS
200 MILES FROM THE COAST COULD ACHIEVE MUCH GREATER
ACCURACY IN MAKING LANDFALL, WHICH NOW VARIES IN ACCURACY
PLUS OR MINUS 50 MILES. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT OMEGA' S
ACCURACY WOULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE CONSIDERABLE
FINANCIAL SAVINGS IN TERMS OF ASSIGNING BERTHS IN PORT
AND GATHERING/ UNLOADING CREWS TOGETHER AT AN APPRO-
PRIATE TIME. THIS IS THE KIND OF INFORMATION WHICH
HE HOPED TO GET POTENTIAL AUSTRALIAN USERS OF THE
SYSTEM TO STATE PUBLICLY IN TERMS OF HARD DOLLARS AND

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8. UNKLES ALSO SADI THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
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STILL HAD SOME CONCERN OVER WHAT HE DESCRIBED AS A " MAGNETIC EQUATORIAL DEVIATION" IN SIGNALS FROM HAIKU IN HAWAII. HE NOTED THAT ABERRANT SIGNALS COULD CAUSE DIFFICULTY DURING NIGHTIME NAVIGATION OR IN PERIODS WHEN NORMAL NAVIGATION AIDS WERE NOT USEFUL BECAUSE OF ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS. HE NOTED THAT IN DUE COURSE THEY WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS THIS PHENOMENON AGAIN WITH PROJECT OMEGA OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON.

9. AS A MATTER OF INTEREST, UNKLES SAID HE CALLED SEVERAL AUSTRALIAN DISTRIBUTORS OF OMEGA RECEIVERS RECENTLY IN ORDER TO GET AN INDICATION OF DELIVERY TIME AND COSTS. HE SAID THAT HE WAS PROMISED DELIVERY OF A MARITIME RECEIVER WITHIN SIX OR EIGHT WEEKS BY EACH OF THE FIRMS HE CONTACTED, WHICH MADE THIS PRACTICALLY SPEAKING, " OFF- THE- SHELF" PROCUREMENT. IN TERMS OF PRICE, HE WAS TOLD THERE IS A JAPANESE MODEL FOR A$3,000, TWO BELGIAN MODELS AVAILABLE FOR A$3,000 AND A$3,500 RESPECTIVELY AND THAT THE NORTHROP MODEL SOLD FOR SOMEWHAT MORE IN AUSTRALIA, ALTHOUGH HE WAS UNABLE TO REMEMBER THE QUOTED PRICE.

10. COMMENT: EMBOFF WAS HIGHLY IMPRESSED WITH REALISTIC AND TOUGH- MINDED ATTITUDE ABOUT OMEGA SHOWN BY UNKLES AND WITH UNKLES' OBVIOUSLY HIGH REGARD FOR MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT JONES ON SAME SUBJECT. THEY ARE OBVIOUSLY, HOWEVER, WORKING IN A NEW AND MORE POLITICAL CONTEXT BECAUSE OF THE REFERRAL OF THE PROJECT TO THE JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE HEADED BY SENATOR WHEELDON. UNKLES' OBVIOUS HOPE IS THAT HE CAN MUSTER SUFFICIENT FACTUAL INFORMATION ABOUT OMEGA TO PRESENT TO THE COMMITTEE AND TO THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC WHICH WILL IN THE END GAIN APPROVAL FOR A STATION IN AUSTRALIA.
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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a
*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 APR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973CANBER02271
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS RICE
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: CANBERRA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730449/aaaaivdw.tel
Line Count: 271
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION PM
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 73 CANBERRA 1972, 71 CANBERRA A-38, 73 CANBERRA A-80
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 OCT 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22-Oct-2001 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <22 FEB 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

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Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> wfs 980128
Subject: PROJECT OMEGA
TAGS: MARR, AS, US
To: PM
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

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